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Sanford Edelstein

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INCARNATUS

a body thou hast prepared me

Spin me no flesh which hero brawned nor used,
heart me the skipping, hurt, inglorious valve,
common me here, foot me multitude,
for many shall be one in all I have.

The belly of the Daughter of the World,
capacious, lovely, made from every man,
yet remote from touch or thrust, uncurls me,
ugly, into alien brother's hand

whose nails I shall yet father, though unpierced.
Vulgar me thus, I stand not prince, not tall,
not filled with doing, my reach not famous-fierce;
I shall not talk with any but the all.

Many shall be won in all I have,
many tread my flesh, whose feet I am,
many hold me killed whom thus I serve;
prepare me history flesh, to this I come.

The small hurt heart whose seizures all men count,
this I choose to bleed through, fix me vein.
Bed me in her loins, plant in that ground,
ground of the morning, to whom no man is stranger,

the story of the fish and of the lemur.
I embrace them all. Your strong cord
calls me God, — yet in the womb's blest tremor
I take the common death your flesh affords.

Albert Paris Leary

YOUTH AND THE BLACK GONDOLA

Note: On the Rock River near Oregon, Illinois, there stands an immense, hollow statue of the Indian Blackhawk. It is now decrepit, but tourists used to be able to look through his ten-foot eyes and parade through the empty concreteness of his folded arms.

"It has been — how many years? — too long
since I have seen this boy,
too long, my daughter!"

(He laughed — did the grandfather — and the song
of autumn moistened with
remembered weather.)

"Europe has left me rich but old, I fear,
and often I have dreamed,
in my rococo"

(He moved in to the window and the air
drained the yellow smell of
a fine tobacco.)

"houses, of these trees with their undying
legends and of how when I
was too a boy"

(Outside a ruffled bluejay still was crying
at sparrows undiverted
from their joy.)

"I roamed these woods and played that I was king.
But, young again, I'd really
have some fun!"

(He laughed and coughed and the mother, a timid thing,

appeased him with some homemade
wine and bun.)

"Thank you, Daughter; you really ought to come
and bring the lad to Venice
for the winter."

(He told them of his life and house in sum
and of his black gondola,
though a-splinter.)

". . . Some ruffians 'used it' when my boatman drowsed,
but still it rides like something
you've never felt."

(The pat-headed youth gazed where the sun-tan browsed—
late seasoned leafy Indian
in a pelt.)

". . . And there's old armor standing in the halls . . .
Daughter, the boy's not hearing!"
He goes. "Is he sick?"

Then daylight tumbled on the outer walls
and gathered song from every
crackling stick.

And he ran, the youth, all red inside his skin,
bared on the hill, while sterile
Blackhawk looked,
toward the cove where a stolen canoe lay low and thin—
green like a peapod, turgid
and uncooked.

Clifford Wood

THE COY MISTRESS REPLIES

If Time, whose gentle Trot was right,
 Hath learnt to gallop over-night;
 If this capacious World so soon
 Is shrunk, and shrivell'd like a prune;
 If heav'nly Virtue's now a crime,
 Concupiscence instead sublime:
 Then these are Marvell's marvels, known
 To his gross wit, and his alone:
 Such fables cannot frighten mee
 Out of my pretious Chastity.

Yet, if hee'll quit his prattling talk
 Of flesh to dust, of bones to chalk,
 Of wintry Toombes, and am'rous worms,
 And seek my love with fairer terms;
 I'll melt, I'll be no longer coy,
 Welcoming honourable Joy:
 Then we'll turn pale, and lose our breath,
 And find a livelier kind of Death:
 For, if today he'll wed me right,
 Why then, I'll die with him tonight.

If not, then Fie to his **rough strife**,
 He wants a bawd, and not a Wife.

Lysander Kemp

ADDRESS TO THE UNION

is it that the citizens fear death because their lives
 have gone so distantly
 We have become the idolaters of masks so that the visitors
 may not know how far we have wandered from home
 this the tragedy of the uprooted who have remained on
 their own territories
 to have pulled up stakes and stay fixed shatters the very
 hope of love

we inquire as to when the ministers in their pulpits with
 the other American Laughing Liars
 will report I was talking with God only last Sunday and
 he told me angels are income-tax deductible
 a new parlorgame called Lets Pretend Whos Different
 sex practically a bullfight lets see how close the horns
 can get without touching and then

whom the gods would destroy they first make bored
 like walt whitman said thou shalt not covet thy neighbors
 navel to drill for oil

what they forgot to yell was ALL MEN HAVE THE RIGHT
 TO BE CREATED UNEQUAL THATS democracy

the infamous boredom that will have us export psycho-
 analytic couches

the docile boredom that puts fairy gandhis onstage danc-
ing their pouting loincloths

capital and labor sitting together before a VD set singing

The Last Time I Saw Paresis

I say its a great country so lets have more of
applepicking time in the rural snotholes

that crackerbarrel wit around the old country potbellied
whore

picture magazines sporting that slick gloss taken right off
the readers eye

the executive landscapes of the metropolises

he threw a forward pass right down where she said you
gotta see my nipplewriting on the wall

hell this countrys outa this world

we got two cars in every mirage

abe lincolns on the mound

georgie washingtons backing him up

its tommie to jimmie to al

the fans are standing for the seventh inning retch

it aint anybodys ballgame

its the united states of americas

its chewinggum tangled in your neighbors nerverlice

its the inside plumbing that counts baby

its the blues going out like the white of your eye

its the cowmoo inside a diesel train

the fourth of july in popcorn blood

its the glory of the marines boy they'll fight with their
backs to the nuthouse wall

its oakridge mother dear where the atoms at night come
out like fireflies

its the supermarket american brain you cant beat it
its babys drool snapped in kodachrome
paul bunyan suffering from corns
and I guess its those strange men the cactus cripples limping
across the southwestern deserts
and the little towns on sunday mornings with their steep
curbs like stiff high celluloid collars

and I guess theres really no other place but the USA
we can go to on saturday nights
because a few people will be dredging the delaware
a few people noticing how the small animals play dice
with the moonlight
a few madmen putting stethoscopes to the bats who will
fly in the wrong windows
a few people smiling at how many honeymooners will
look over niagara falls without trembling
a nuclear physicist who no matter how much lead and concrete
he puts between himself and his wife will sustain
the effects of radiation the moment she gives birth to
their child

if only there werent so many phony wrestlers.

Gil Orlovitz

LINES TO BE SPOKEN FOR A DANCE OF REMEMBRANCE

1. We dance. Plucked strings
Like fiery pincers nip
The nerve-ends, fever them
From toe to fingertip

The clarinets reach out
Articulate the living tissue
Fiddles moan a wounded insolence
The drumbeat echoes in the bone

How crazily the spotlight swings
A dream of jungle twilight
Drums diminish to a juju tempo
Breast to breast and thigh to thigh
Embrace, and with the lion's pride
The panther's grace

2. Somehow tonight, you say,
We tap a deeper vein.
It may be something that we dimly sense
They know. . . .

Before the sphinx, before the stylus,
Fire descended in a bolt from heaven

In those days the wind spoke words
In whispers, with a tongue of wind

Beneath the sacred oak we slept
And dreamed. . . .

Before the stylus, in a time of night,
Fire descended in a bolt from heaven

All things were given us to know
Half moon, blue lotus, lore of fingernails

Red calyx of the nether lips of love
Prehensile, a carnivorous flower

The wheeling stars intoned her name
The night a great black flower
Burned cavernous with flame

Do we in this our dancing share
A vision that they see?
With silken mask of irony
We mask our eyes against the gloom,
We laugh, the laugh goes bitter
On our lips. With ribald song
We sing aloud
And weave this many-colored song
To be our shroud

On dancing feet we go to meet our doom
For is not death a dancer too?

3. In this our midnight of the soul
We see no phantoms that our fathers saw.

But only him our science made,
 And did not think it strange
 His hand was hairy and his feet were splayed.

He, the ancestor, Caliper, the Index,
 Marking the cranial ratio, orbital span,
 Flat femur, cross section of the hair,
 He the handicapper, biologic auditor
 With delicate ageless hands
 Forging chains of genes and chromosomes
 For us — — who is himself enchained,
 His wrist manacled with number,
 His heart the metronome
 Of biologic law, predetermined beyond
 Pity or desire, from first to last.

4. Out of our sickness we create
 These delicate monstrosities,
 A cat with every hair-end curled
 A death's-head with a rose
 Between his teeth,
 The fantasies of prisoners in stir
 A mock psychosis or a faxensyndrom.

Under the outraged mind
 Memory moves, returning . . .

In those nights the moon was low
 And near; we bathed in moonlight.
 In the greying sundown there was talk

Of gentle things. We sipped slow wine
From bells of crystal. The stems
Were very long. . . . I think

The rhythm in the brain sets up
Vibrations, deep where awe and wonder move,
Translates emotion into motion, thought
Into the metaphor of gesture, object
And observer merge in one, performing
The creative act, mimetic picture
Of the world we know. A universe
Articulate, as when

The dinosaurs in ponderous, slow
And solemn measure once
Danced out the drama of their life, so now
The monsters of the deep contend
In hieratic gesture; clouds enact
The choreography of storm; the fawn
Leaps up, the eagle dips his wing
To greet the first immaculate hour of dawn.

The wind is witness of these things
And brings me echoes; words that speak
In deadly earnest like the sound of gongs
Announcing executions. This I know
The wind has visited these places like
The awful visitations of the ghosts
And left its mark on them. Walk softly,
All the world is sacred ground
Where such things once have been.

Lawrence Lipton

THESE ESTUARIES

Rivers of desire flow down to sea
 Where lone gull cries,
 Lingers longingly upwind-ward to a lee
 Of softer things — his vibrant wings
 Curve brave a glory bold beneath our vivid sun,
 Flashing, besparkled, sky-met — his cries
 A-hollowing along dark rocks toward shore
 — are we undying more than ever these
 Bird shrieks? What other estuaries
 Of blood's passion
 Gap-womb-wider up-into arising ecstasies
 Descending dreamily alive-lost low deep under
 Wondered love-borne streaming seas?
 My bare Beloved! — this gull is wild wind-mounting there
 High swiftly-crazed above our tawny forms!
 O gentle Aiko! — see how falling amber air
 Dies instantly gray-shadowed vague across his seeking
 wing?

He awesome feels, as we **now** feel, coast-coming storms!

Bruce Brown

OF HUMAN REVELATION

Man is lonely or else in love
 — tho his reason is stonely of
 A battered choice!
 He breathes or dies of his rejoice,

His remembrance, his unbound spring
 Or else — winter where bare hills pure ring
 Stark frozen of betrayed desire — nor human fire
 Can e'er undo nor thaw low lakes
 — nor wild birds fly! Alone snowflakes
 Die strange upon my upturned hands
 And wounding music clouds unkind this hallowed sun
 — thus love and loneliness immortally unite
 These separate lands
 Of dark and light
 My heart illusion-wise had thought were one!

Bruce Brown

MADE FLESH

Cleanse me in mathematics, not in blood.
 Lay its chill chasteness tangent to my flesh.
 A square is no Pandora's Box of dread;
 A circle is not circumscribed to crush.
 Constructing angles of a polygon
 Wider than worlds rouses no nation's rancor.
 Spaceless geometry deprives no man
 Upon the postulate, "In this sign conquer."
 Yet, disciplined with eye, ruled off by pen,
 Or dropped from brain to hand, no line flows straight.
 A circle may assume the loop of chain,
 A square incarnate in the jaw hate-set.
 So may, made wood, two lines by intersection
 Form the contortion of the Crucifixion.

Vassar Miller

THE FLICKER

The flicker shrill upon a pole
 Praises his soul;
 His message strong with disapproval
 Champions removal
 Of the robin and his kind
 Who fail to find
 Virtue in the flicker's shouting
 And evil routing.

The robin listens with his mate,
 Holds shoulders straight,
 Hops away dactylically
 To a tree.

The flicker, neck of angry scarlet,
 Shouts, "Harlot,"
 At Mrs. Robin, while his neighbor
 Continues labor.

The flicker speaks of flickers blest;
 But, oh, the flicker's nest.

Hollis Summers

MONOLOGUE AT SEA

"Your attention, please.
This is your ship's central captain.
Attention.

"As some of you may have noticed,
we have passed the outer islands,
passed breakwater land, and because
the sun, like all else, is dying,
we can no longer put in,
not even at a gannet's shadow
riding on the backward ripples
of the darkening, deepening
porpoise whisper sea. (Go to the rail
and you can watch youth drain
from the face of the single sky
while silence thickens landwards
on the sunrise wind.)

"We are progressing, dead speed ahead
between tide and wave
with all anchors snapped
that moored us to the sky,
and our ship has just met itself
head on at the meridian.
It is further my duty to inform you
that we have no compass but the sea.
This is the emergency words were made for,
but our code and cabalese have broken down.

"In short, crew and passengers alike,
all whom I could have loved,

we are lonely-lost
 in the possibility of sinking ships
 and there are not enough words to go around.
 Please — and this is important —
 be alert to your neighbor,
 but do not — I repeat —
 do not panic.

"Those of you who have names and can swim,
 share them with your brothers.
 Look to the landborn children,
 who have not fear enough
 to look for words in the right rings,
 look to yourselves, you mid-ocean men.
 Throw overboard the ballast of your silence.
 And you, who have traveled far enough
 to know, on any voyage,
 that death is steward to your needs,
 and who know with unrestraint
 that you will never meet again
 the passengers with whom you speak,
 speak up. Save your fellow
 as you would speak to yourself
 at noon on homeward day.

"The ship has met its image in the night.
 But all is not lost, if among us
 there are words enough for one man
 to walk the waters and say,
 'Be still.' "

J. R. Brownfield

THE POACHER

Heavy-hearted, old and trembling,
he was now, the hunter, William,
sat beside me on the wayside,
smoked his pipe and ruminated,
quietly he told his stories:

"Rich men came and took our forests,
took our fields, our meager meadows,
even took our wives and children.
Into slaves they wished to turn us,
they forbade to us our hunting,
crime to slay our elk when hungry.
But I thought:—I'll have vengeance,
I will kill the deer you've stolen,
rob you of the spoils you've taken,
feed myself and hungry children.

Far and wide I have now wandered,
high in fjells and deep in valleys;
far from house and miles from highroad
has my ancient gun gone singing
songs of death to three-year monarchs.
Seen by no one, I have skinned them,
severed, cut and cooked at campfires,
ate my meat and drank my braennvin,
glad to smell the red blood flowing,
streaming on the ground before me.
Meat I also hid in caches
under wind-felled trees and bushes,
rested there a while to gather

strength to take the long way homeward
with my load of haunch and shoulder.

In the hide, all warm and bloody,
have I rolled myself securely,
so in hidden, pitch-black passes
I could sleep in dreamless sleeping,
hunger stayed and tired from killing.

Laddy, I have carried elk-meat
sack-wise over murky valleys,
waded deep in boggy marshes
back and forth to where I slaughtered;
most at nightfall without moonlight,
most in pitch-black starless darkness,
led by wind and seen by no one;
carried salt from store to cabin,
pits I dug for storing barrels,
salted meat and thanked my Maker
for a good and well-earned ration,
food for wife, myself and children.

Now the day is slowly dying,
sun is sinking, twilight's falling
over old familiar places.
Old am I, with hunting ended,
but I gladden and I glory
over ways that I have wandered,
over dangers I have breasted,
most though over elks I've hunted,
skinned and cut in nights of darkness,
while the new-made forest masters
slept upon their downy couches."

Dan Andersson

translated from the Swedish by Caroline Schleef

MARS, VENUS, VULCAN

That falling Mars, a god unarmored, an orb
of no bronze, the image invites as its own
dissolution. What we have made of fragments
is the word; what is annealed is feeling, the sign.

Need it be this planet and no other? In what
webs was he caught? His fiery worth was stranger
to the craftsman's love, that love whose art
was a woman or a fine skein to hold.

That globe was bound in its own girth, that bronze
wrought the work of wars; his arms to her
soft arms calmed and closed, whose fire opened
to the full round of her mouth, a rose, his source.

Honey and a sting of gold, her hair fell like light
that lover and lover enclosed; and in its combs fled
the singing wind or a web of their golden night:
Venus and Mars turned flesh in a hive of stars.

The crippled god released not the scent but the flower,
a final music murmuring, and metal insects
tuned the hour; the sudden summer quickly bloomed,
and the gods lay in the circle of their common wound.

With love and violence, the strong were meshed
in separateness: so the forgotten word breaks the sword,
the morning star vanishes, and one hears on
sulphurous nights, is it bees among the upstriking corn?

Gene Baro

NOW FROM THE SOUTH COMES NAKEDNESS

Now from the south comes nakedness,
the greening voyage, the green continual
river moving seaward, and the heavy
color of the islands' blossoming verge.

Even as the sea will hold the sun,
this fruit will clasp its stone, where,
under the rind, is the hard, white
flesh of Eden. Even the green-lit

twilight, restless of leaves, encloses
the mysterious animal, flickering
skin, shrill cry of the perfecting
bird. Echoes warn in the long night,

but for the core of silence, the sounding root.
This traveling green and sensual voyage
sees bodies plunging through the morning
wood, massive limbs and the print

of delicate feet, turning, pathless.
Like light, these forms tremble
upon the viable dark, the poise
of shell and echo, and upon the breathless waters

moving seaward, the molten sea
that is the film of sun and dark's
conduit. Locked, too, are the fortunate islands
in the lure of tides, links of the green moon.

Ripeness is the rot of it,
but not the beginning green, the sensual
interruption startled into flight,

like new leaves running in a vanity of winds.

The old will fall: the gourds will yield
a black seed of sun; a bruise of color
will corrupt the flesh; and the beast
will cry out fulfilled, cry down the alien fever.

Even so, remember the stranger
who seized love and burst from the enraptured
wood — he, too, was young in that green
country, naked — but who would dare?

Gene Baro

THE THIEF

I wasn't the kind for high places.
My one chance was the crowd.
But the sixth hour the sky darkened,
And I dropped the poker face, the comedy . . .
Still, I faced it. Even with a crook
And a witness.

Maybe it was
The bloody crowd or his mother.
Maybe he was shy. Maybe the damned
Soldiers, rubbing his face with vinegar,
Ruined it. Believe me, the slowest
To confide is a witness.

There was
Not one henchman responded to his signal —
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? The
Cryptic Marys wound into the crowd
Like beads. Only the nails
Gave me courage, when he died.

David Galler

OPINION

The Inferno. Translated from the Italian of Dante Alighieri by John Ciardi, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 288 pp. \$4.50. New York: New American Library. Mentor Book, 288 pp. 50 cents

Hell. Translated from the Italian of Dante Alighieri by Dorothy L. Sayers, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books. 345 pp. 65 cents

Life of Dante. By Michele Barbi, translated by Paul G. Ruggiers, Berkeley: University of California Press. 132 pp. \$3.00

Dante's Drama of the Mind. By Francis Fergusson, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 232 pp. \$4.00

Moorish Poetry. An anthology translated by A. J. Arberry, New York: Cambridge University Press. 199 pp. \$3.75

The Fables of La Fontaine. Translated by Marianne Moore, New York: The Viking Press. 342 pp. \$5.00

THE tantalizing problems involved in any attempt to translate poetry from one language to another have fascinated poets almost since there have been poems to translate. Writers as widely varied in their intellectual approach as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Ezra Pound, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Alexander Pope, to name only four, have grappled with the peculiar genius of the English language and have vainly tried to create in it something approximating an original text in French or Greek or Italian or Chinese.

In effect, most translators are willing to admit at least partial defeat almost before they start. Dorothy Sayers in the Introduction to her version of Dante's **Inferno** states it flatly: "It (the translation) is not, of course, Dante; no translation could ever be Dante."

John Ciardi in a Note at the start of his rendering of

the same work is perhaps more elaborate, but his meaning is similar enough: "When the violin repeats what the piano has just played, it cannot make the same sounds and it can only approximate the same chords. It can, however, make recognizably the same 'music,' the same air. But it can do so only when it is as faithful to the self-logic of the violin as it is to the self-logic of the piano.

"Language too is an instrument, and each language has its own logic. I believe that the process of rendering from language to language is better conceived as a 'transposition' than as a 'translation,' for 'translation' implies a series of word-for-word equivalents that do not exist across language boundaries any more than piano sounds exist in the violin."

Translation or transposition or transmutation — the process has been called all of these and more — is difficult. But mercifully, poets are reckless and anxious to try. Thus literature in English has been so vastly enriched through some of the great translations that it would be hard to imagine what it would be like without them.

Let us briefly consider some of the recent translations that have appeared.

Dante Alighieri was called by William Butler Yeats "the chief imagination of Christendom." T. S. Eliot has said that Dante is "the most universal of poets in the modern languages." Ezra Pound recommended that even those who know no Italian will profit from a careful reading of Dante in the original, so powerful is his poetic appeal. Yet, it is amazing how little the great Florentine is actually read. Talked about, referred to, cited, quoted . . . yes. But read, unfortunately, no.

Four volumes — two new and two older ones recently made reavailable — should do much to correct this lamentable situation. John Ciardi's translation of **The Inferno**, the first book of **The Divine Comedy**, is a remarkable performance. Many Dante scholars will gnash their teeth over this free use of idiom, this fresh approach. They'll point out many places in the text where

Ciardi wanders from the original. They'll no doubt deplore his cavalier use then disregard for the **terza rima**, so much a part of the Italian.

Somehow, at the risk of being accused of heresy, none of this bothered me. There are many translations of **The Divine Comedy** easily available — Longfellow's, Binyon's, Carlyle-Wicksteed's, Norton's, etc., etc. — but none of these comes as close to bringing this unique (and bitterly difficult) fourteenth-century work so thrillingly alive for a twentieth-century reader. Here are the essential elements of Dante's thought and allegory within his framework refined through a contemporary poet's instinct for **our** language and so made freshly vital for us. We can see with our eyes and hear with our ears a six-hundred year old message. And so it becomes a pertinent excitement for us. The notes are ample; the Introduction concise and to the point. This is a rare and rewarding book. Can we ask for more?

Dorothy Sayers, on the other hand, is far more Dantean. Her translation of **L'Inferno**, first published in 1949, is wholly within the framework of the original, and she has worked mightily to remain faithful to it. The **terza rima** is rigorously observed even at the expense of some pretty tortured phrasing, some very unusual words, and some really oblique couplings. But this, she feels, is essential to the spirit of the poem. She expends a good deal of effort softening the blow for what, in truth, must be regarded as her translation's chief failure. Rhyme is easy in Italian because of the relatively few vowel sounds. English presents a far more complicated picture both because of our greater number of vowel sounds and our greater variety of possible consonant clusters. In a sense, we are thus rhyme-poor. Any attempt to maintain the complicated pattern that Dante establishes (aba, bcb, cdc, ded, etc.) is bound to run into serious trouble.

But it would be grossly unfair to confine a consideration of Sayers' translation to this single point. In many other respects it is a useful, if not inspiring, rendering. Sayers has worked carefully to present the elaborate

architectural substructure of Dante with precision and clarity. In this she succeeds. The complicated underpinnings of the poem are lucid here as they have seldom been before. She has also provided a lengthy introduction, a glossary, and a series of notes, diagrams, and synopses that are extremely useful, especially to someone new to Dante's intricate interweaving of historical fact, myth, and theological allegory.

Two books about Dante deserve comment here. Since its first publication in 1933, Michele Barbi's **Life of Dante** has become a touchstone for Italian scholars. We are now fortunate to have it available in Professor Paul Ruggiers' fine translation. It is a surprisingly short work (originally designed as an article for the **Enciclopedia Italiana**) but packed with essential information about Dante's life, his works, and reputation.

Barbi contends that any true understanding of the **Commedia** requires us to think of it in Dante's terms. "Dante intended to create a poem, not in our modern fashion, but rather according to the ideas of his age which concurred in conceiving of a poetry that did not exclude the practical ends of teaching and moral reform." This is not currently a "fashionable" school of criticism, nor is it an easy plan to follow. But it presents a point of view that we are inclined to ignore too often to our poetic impoverishment.

Technically, Francis Fergusson's **Dante's Drama of the Mind** should not be included in this review. It is not a translation. But since it is subject matter that really counts, some few words about it here are in order. The book is a detailed study of the **Purgatorio**, the central book of the **Comedy**, designed to help the reader understand the development of the whole poem. This section, Fergusson feels, is pivotal, the heart of the work. It contains Dante's answer to Hell and his preparation for the splendors of Paradise. The author does a splendid job helping us to comprehend the emergence of Dante's vision. Meant only for students thoroughly familiar with the text, it is excellent supplementary reading for the specialist.

As difficult as Dante's poetry may be for us, we feel a definite kinship of language with him. This is not the case with the Arabic poetry first gathered into an anthology by Ibn Sa'id al-Andalusi in 1243 and recently translated by A. J. Arberry as **Moorish Poetry**. A storm was raised by this volume. Scholars have debated its arrangement, its notes, its readings of doubtful passages. Having no acquaintance with the original text, we will have to consider the work simply as poetry in English.

As such it presents problems. Much of the imagery is hopelessly foreign to us. The short three and four beat lines grow monotonous. The tortuous inversions (perhaps in the original — perhaps a contribution of the translator) are disturbing. Arberry states: "The great temptation is to dilute; that I have fought to avoid, often at the expense of clarity." The resulting rich confusion is all too apparent too often.

Yet the poetry shines through occasionally with flashes of verbal brilliance, exotic imagery, provocative combinations of opposites — love and hate, tenderness and brutality, lust and virtue, and even several whole poems that are startling in their lurid beauty.

Three centuries of French students have cut their teeth on **The Fables of La Fontaine**. Now Marianne Moore has made them over for us into English; "made them over," I say, rather than "translated." That's too bald a word to use in this instance. For here is the translator's art at its finest. The sly wit and naive charm peculiar to the French originals have been refined into a wit and charm that are now peculiarly English in their feeling. The text is followed carefully, but almost from the start one can see the easily identifiable touches that now make these poems as much the work of Marianne Moore as of La Fontaine.

It is doubtful if a more ideal combination of text and translator can be named. All of Moore's previous work seems almost like preparation of this eight-year effort. Her world has always been populated with real toads in imaginary gardens, and here this population speaks

with precision, wisdom, wit, and endless inventiveness.

There have been critics who have complained that La Fontaine has been relegated to a back seat in this translation. I'm not so sure that's not as it should be. There is no real agreement about a translator's exact function. There is no way of measuring how far he should push himself into the picture; unless it be to measure his success.

Is there too much Marianne Moore here? Well . . . only if you think that there can be too much of a good thing!

R.H.G.

Selected Poems. By Marya Zaturenska, New York: Grove Press. 130 pp. \$3.50

The Eye. By Harvey Shapiro, Denver: Alan Swallow. 44 pp. \$2.00

A Summoning of Stones. By Anthony Hecht, New York: The Macmillan Company. 64 pp. \$2.50

The Toy Fair. By Howard Moss, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 72 pp. \$2.50

An Armada of Thirty Whales. By Daniel G. Hoffman, New Haven: Yale University Press. 48 pp. \$2.50

ONE of the very real problems faced by a reviewer covering many slim volumes at once concerns the recommendation of purchase. Which of the books would the reader really want to add to his library? And the answer depends somewhat upon how one reads his poetry. Most of us return to our shelves not to re-read whole volumes diligently but for respite and to re-experience discovered favorites — and, in passing, to look for new experiences. Thus memorableness becomes a very practical criterion, memorableness generated from an intense unification of feeling and insight in which something has happened to us. Mere brilliant craftsmanship, though it has its immediate delights, disperses

itself quickly through and out of the imagination. Yet we all know that whatever is going to happen to us must start on this surface. There it is enflashed and kept available. The reviewer, therefore, has to judge boldly the success with which an experience, if there is one, is intricated in its language.

Miss Zaturenska has won a Pulitzer Prize for her pretty poems. They are just that — pretty, filled with rhymes like clime-time, lore-more, silk-milk, flow-snow, and even arises-surprises; filled with flowers of several sorts, sunlight, fire, trees, the moon, the seasons, "the warning trumpet," and "winged immortal joy." She works in a delicate rhetoric with comfortably common poetic props, near clichés that often are differentiated from the humdrum only slightly, sometimes imperceptibly. There is, to put it another way, an overreliance on association and essentially literary sentiment. Therefore, even though the versification is admirably firm, our response is frequently uncontrolled, imprecise, and of course unintense. The core words of a lyric are set as decorations in its surface, abstract items, attractive enough, but which concatenate into no single formed experience. So, frequently when she enters into direct utterance, she has to wage a wordy battle for meaning: "Our dream of ideal earth still mocks, can soothe and heal,/ Tempers our rage, restrains our intemperate zeal." But in the new poems of this selection a noticeable decrease of such unleavened matter and of abstract decorations is coupled with a nicer command of our feelings.

Less conventionally, Mr. Shapiro also writes pretty, decorative poetry filled of course with eyes but also with halls, doors, blood "unlaced" and blood "spinning," coffins, clowns, and circuses. His idiom is patently more modern. And like Miss Zaturenska he has relative successes too, "Power in America" and the four fine poems called "Battle Report." But again the reader finds himself alone with a surface that is more a manner of expression than expression itself; a surface that is busy with elements distracting interest from each

other instead of establishing tensions and ultimately dimensions of feeling. Mr. Shapiro is seldom able to effect the miracle of belief. We are inclined to stop and ask blankly what a phrase means: "a sun-constructed day," "July unhives its heaven," "those areas or the sun that I call home." In most of **The Eye** there are stray evocative lines ("And the little song hopped/ Like the eye of a sparrow"), that, though arresting, leave us more perplexed than involved.

In poetry less lyrical, where the artist seizes upon reflective, cerebral opportunities, the apparently decorative may be cause of additional richness. That is, the poet multiplies the responses to his central insight by integrating more and more instances. Mr. Hecht does this with baroque gusto and fabricates an animated book, probably the most exciting of the group.

In the dark belly of a viol, air

Revolved, swirled like a frightened school of perch
Caught in the clever weave of closing nets,

Or, like the spiral steps of minarets,

Whirled around a single dowel of sound, in search
Of the Existence which is named in prayer.

This stanza leads into pinwheels, ferris wheels, carousel, and Sperry gyroscopes that make only one poem out of four on the topic of air. The best poems are those longer ones in which we share the intimate workings of a refined mind creating significances out of its visit to the Villa d'Este gardens or the Frick. Given sympathy and effort, these poems become not only tighter structures but also increasingly memorable experiences in feeling values.

Mr. Moss' work is neither so elaborated nor so vivid nor, therefore, so intriguing. For instance, it is easy to remember that among the most readable poems in this volume are those on places (Bermuda, Montauk, Venice); at the same time we only dully recollect our attitude toward the same places. The poems of wittiness ("Salt-Water Taffy," "Romantic Love") and of affection ("Elegy for My Father") stick better in the mind, and throughout the poems there are passages subject to

total recall: "Somewhere a slow/ Piano scales the summits of the air/ And disappears, and dark descends," or

... the tourist birds whose spindle-legs
Are folded, flying from the summer's dregs;
Before them now blue sky unfurls
Its wishing map of migratory worlds.

But just because of affection and wit many of the poems sink overloaded in their impeccable metrical structures. Others also fall apart in nightmarish fragmentation. In still others our feelings seem hardly touched ("A Snare and a Delusion"); we face an unburning metaphysic while the mere intellect has its fun. The book has no single voice and is uneven.

At hardly any point in his **Armada** do we feel that Mr. Hoffman is absent as a full shaping consciousness. In this respect his book is like Mr. Hecht's and also in intensity, but the experiences that he involves us in are tight, non-discursive arrivals at a complex insight. We are moved usually from the objective — the cycle of pears, the nature of clams or lobster-pots — angularly, brilliantly, sometimes gaudily verbalized to direct statement of implications. "That the pear delighted me/ is wholly incidental,/ for the flower was for the fruit,/ the fruit is for the seed." Almost invariably these brief statements, when we get to them, are laden with sensuous and vibrant preconceptions so that they end us in a new knowledge beyond their sum of words. Contained in the above lines are the sentiments declining from new spring to "When Indian Summer strains/ the last warmth through the orchard/ pear-pits feast and feel/ and stir, and burst, and breed." The success of each poem depends therefore upon the reader's being neatly dropped through a succession of perceptions. Occasionally Mr. Hoffman overelaborates — "a rocking-horse melon that mounts a sleek hind" — and the reader falters, becomes disenchanted. More often than not, however, he makes something unified and real happen to us.

L.B.N.

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